

# **HONOLULU-PACIFIC FEDERAL EXECUTIVE BOARD GUIDELINES FOR EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND DISMISSAL OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES DURING EMERGENCY SITUATIONS**

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this plan is to have a course of action to respond to emergency situations that may prevent significant numbers of federal employees on the island of Oahu from reporting for work on time or that require agencies to close all or part of their activities. This document is designed to provide the following:

- The guidance and operational procedures required to eliminate or reduce the potential harm to federal employees from adverse weather conditions (high wind, high surf, flash flood, hurricane, tsunami), disruptions of power and/or water, riots, civil disturbances, acts of war, acts of terrorism or chemical/biological threats.
- Recommendations on dismissal or non-dismissal of federal employees during emergencies. When the recommendation is to stay open, the FEB will issue an advisory statement to that effect as well.

## **AUTHORITY**

The authority for this action is the Federal Executive Board charter given by President John F. Kennedy on November 1, 1961 and Part 960 of Title 5 of the Code of Federal Regulations. "The Federal Executive Boards shall be responsible for...responding to emergency operations, such as under hazardous weather conditions; responding to blood donation needs; and communicating related leave policies;" 5 CFR 960.107. The plan outlined here is consistent with the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) Emergency Dismissal Procedures for the Washington, D.C. area.

## **OVERVIEW**

All employees are to presume, unless otherwise notified, that their office or activity will be opened each regular workday regardless of any adverse weather or other conditions that may develop.

When offices cannot be opened or employees cannot report, it is important that all federal agencies affected by the same emergency conditions coordinate their plans in advance for releasing or excusing employees. This includes establishing common leave

and dismissal policies to avoid confusion and to promote equitable treatment of employees.

### **EMERGENCY CONDITIONS DEFINED**

An emergency situation is one that may prevent significant numbers of employees from reporting for work or may require partially or totally closing federal activities. Covered conditions include adverse weather conditions (high wind, high surf, flash flood, hurricane, tsunami), disruptions of power and/or water, major fires, massive power failures, serious interruptions to public transportation, riots, civil disturbances, acts of war, acts of terrorism or chemical/biological threats or other catastrophic conditions.

In Hawaii, severe weather or ocean conditions are most likely to activate this plan. Isolated emergencies, such as fire at a single facility or bomb threats, are covered by that facility's emergency plan. This guideline is not intended for use in isolated emergencies. It is issued solely to coordinate the dismissal of federal employees in those situations where all or most federal activities on Oahu would be closing.

### **GEOGRAPHIC AREA COVERED BY THESE GUIDELINES**

Procedures are applicable to Oahu only due to the limitations of the emergency notification system and the diverse conditions of the neighbor islands. Agencies that have offices on the neighbor islands should provide guidance to their managers and supervisors to make decisions regarding dismissal as dictated by local conditions.

### **FEDERAL EXECUTIVE BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES**

The recommendation to dismiss early or to stay open will be developed by the FEB Chair with input from the Executive Director and, as time permits, the Policy Committee based on information provided by State Civil Defense, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) or the Prince Kuhio Federal Building Designated Official.

Agency contact personnel will be notified of the FEB's recommendation to stay open, dismiss early, or close through the State Civil Defense computer and/or the Emergency Telephone Cascade Notification System.

The FEB will maintain a current database of all Oahu federal agency primary and alternate emergency contacts with work, home, and cell telephone numbers. At least annually, the FEB Chair will request that each federal agency on Oahu provide the FEB with updated information for its database.

The FEB will coordinate with the Oahu Civil Defense and will serve in the Oahu Civil Defense Agency emergency operations center.

The FEB will provide information to the following news media concerning status of public services and federal employees' reporting requirements:

1. State Civil Defense (for access to the Emergency Broadcast System)
2. Other appropriate media, such as radio or television

Radio and television announcements will be general in nature.

Agencies are encouraged to notify the general public of any service disruption.

The Federal Executive Board will also notify the Office of Personnel Management in Washington, D.C., of any closure or adjusted work schedule. Upon receiving notification from the FEB, the OPM Director will be informed of the situation and the information will be posted on OPM's web site.

During an emergency situation, the Federal Executive Board will update its web site at [www.honolulu-pacific.feb.gov](http://www.honolulu-pacific.feb.gov) with the FEB's recommendation and the status of federal agencies on Oahu.

The FEB Chair will advise federal agencies in writing of any scheduled tests of the emergency automated response system or use of the Emergency Telephone Cascade Notification System.

The FEB will review and update this plan annually.

#### Prince Kuhio Federal Building Only

In an emergency that only affects the Prince Kuhio Federal Building and its tenant agencies, the Building Designated Official, the 14th Coast Guard District Commander and GSA representatives in coordination with the FEB will make recommendations to stay open, dismiss early or close the building.

During work hours, the General Services Administration (GSA) will use the public address system to make an announcement throughout the Prince Kuhio Federal Building.

#### AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES

Within agencies, existing communication systems will be used. Agencies are urged to keep a copy of this plan both in the office and at home and provide a copy to their designated contact personnel.

Agencies should identify emergency personnel and notify them in writing that they are designated as “emergency employees.” The term “emergency employee” is used to designate those employees who must report for work in emergency situations. The notice should include the requirement that “emergency employees” report for or remain at work in emergency situations and an explanation that dismissal or closure announcements do not apply to them unless they are instructed otherwise. If an agency determines that a situation requires employees not designated as “emergency employees” to report for work or remain at work during an emergency, the agency should establish a procedure for notifying them individually.

If possible, agencies should report their dismissal decisions by calling the FEB at 541-2637/38 and leaving a message on the recorder describing what services will or will not be available to the public and reporting requirements for incoming workers. This information will provide the FEB a consolidated view of the agency status. It will also be posted on the FEB web page at [www.honolulu-pacific.feb.gov](http://www.honolulu-pacific.feb.gov).

If the FEB’s Emergency Telephone Cascade Notification System is unable to telephone your agency contact personnel, you can call the FEB office at 541-2637/38 for a recording of the recommendation and the latest status of the emergency situation.

Agencies should **immediately** notify the FEB at 541-2637/38 whenever there are any changes in designated contact personnel or their telephone numbers.

## **AGENCY PLANS**

The FEB highly recommends each agency develop a written plan to address preparation for and operations during emergency conditions and to review it annually. Dismissal plans should contain the following as a minimum:

1. Designation of “emergency positions” and procedures for informing employees in these positions of that designation in writing.
2. Methods for informing non-emergency employees who are at work of dismissal decisions and procedures for informing employees at home to remain there.
3. Methods for informing employees of termination of the emergency and requirements for returning to work.
4. This plan as an attachment.

## **PREROGATIVES OF AGENCIES**

Agency officials have authority to dismiss employees during emergency conditions and nothing prevents them from dismissing employees in the absence of a FEB

recommendation. The FEB recommendation is advisory only and participation is voluntary; however, agencies are strongly encouraged to give special consideration to the advisory when making a decision. Deviations should be reserved for special conditions relating to such factors as geography or unique agency missions so that both the public and our own employees will better understand our actions.

## EMERGENCY ANNOUNCEMENTS

### EMERGENCIES DURING NON-WORK HOURS (before 6:00 a.m. and after 4:00 p.m.)

The FEB will provide one of the following five announcements when an emergency occurs during non-work hours (before 6:00 a.m. and after 4:00 p.m.). (For additional guidance on excused absence, see the paragraph following this table.)

<b>Emergency Announcement</b>	<b>What Announcement Means</b>	<b>Additional Guidance</b>
1. "Federal agencies on Oahu are <b>OPEN</b> for business as usual. Employees are expected to report for work on time."	Federal agencies will open on time, and employees are expected to report for work as scheduled.	Agencies should be as flexible as possible in approving annual leave or leave without pay (LWOP) for employees who face emergency situations or other hardships (e.g., when schools/child care centers open late or are closed).
2. "Federal agencies on Oahu are <b>OPEN</b> for business as usual under an <b>UNSCHEDULED LEAVE</b> policy. Employees may take leave without prior approval."	Federal agencies will open on time, but employees not designated as "emergency employees" may take annual leave or leave without pay (LWOP) without the prior approval of their supervisors. "Emergency employees" are expected to report for work on time.	Employees must inform their supervisors if they plan to take annual leave or LWOP. If an employee fails to report for work and has not informed the supervisor of his or her plans to take leave, the agency may charge the employee absence without leave (AWOL).

Emergency Announcement	What Announcement Means	Additional Guidance
<p>3. "Federal agencies on Oahu are <b>OPEN</b> for business as usual under an <b>ADJUSTED HOME DEPARTURE</b> policy. Employees are requested to leave home ## hours later than their normal departure time."</p>	<p>Federal agencies will open on time, but employees not designated as "emergency employees" should adjust their normal home departure time consistent with the announcement. Employees who arrive late for work will be excused without loss of pay or charge to leave. Agencies have discretionary authority to determine the amount of excused absence to grant in such cases. "Emergency employees" are expected to report for work on time.</p>	<p>Agencies may use OPM's "<a href="#">Handbook on Alternative Work Schedules, December 1996</a>" (section 12, "Flexible Work Schedules," paragraph 1) to determine the normal arrival time of employees on flexible work schedules. The handbook is available on OPM's website at <a href="http://www.opm.gov/oca/aws">www.opm.gov/oca/aws</a>.</p>
<p>4. "Federal agencies on Oahu are <b>OPEN</b> for business as usual under an <b>ADJUSTED HOME DEPARTURE/UNSCHEDULED LEAVE</b> policy. Employees are requested to leave home ## hours later than their normal departure time. Employees may take leave without prior approval."</p>	<p>Federal agencies will open on time, but employees not designated as "emergency employees" should adjust their normal home departure time consistent with the announcement. Employees who arrive late for work will be excused without loss of pay or charge to leave. Agencies have discretionary authority to determine the amount of excused absence to grant in such cases. Employees may take annual leave or LWOP without the prior approval of their supervisors. "Emergency employees" are expected to report for work on time.</p>	<p>Employees must inform their supervisors if they plan to take annual leave or LWOP. Employees who take leave will be charged leave for the entire workday.</p> <p>Agencies may use OPM's "<a href="#">Handbook on Alternative Work Schedules, December 1996</a>" (section 12, "Flexible Work Schedules," paragraph 1) to determine the normal departure time of employees on flexible work schedules. The handbook is available on OPM's website at <a href="http://www.opm.gov/oca/aws">www.opm.gov/oca/aws</a>.</p>

Emergency Announcement	What Announcement Means	Additional Guidance
5. "Federal agencies are <b>CLOSED</b> ."	Employees not designated as "emergency employees" (including telecommuting employees at an alternative work site) are excused from duty without loss of pay or charge to leave. "Emergency employees" are expected to report for work on time.	<p>Workdays on which a federal activity is closed are non-workdays for leave purposes. Employees who are on approved leave before the closure must be granted excused absence. This does not apply to employees on LWOP, military leave, suspension, or in a nonpay status.</p> <p>Employees on alternative work schedules (AWS) are <b>not</b> entitled to another AWS day off "in lieu of" the workday on which the agency is closed.</p>

**Excused Absence**—Agencies may excuse an employee without loss of pay or charge to leave (i.e., grant a reasonable amount of excused absence) if the employee is unavoidably delayed in arriving for work. Factors such as distance, availability of transportation, the need to make alternative child care arrangements, and the success of other employees in similar situations should be considered in determining the amount of excused absence to grant. However, employees have no entitlement to excused absence. Agencies must notify employees of the procedures to be followed in this situation.

#### **EMERGENCIES DURING NORMAL WORK HOURS (6:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.)**

When an emergency situation occurs during normal work hours, the FEB may announce that federal agencies on Oahu are operating under an **ADJUSTED WORK DISMISSAL** policy. When this announcement is made, employees should be dismissed relative to their normal departure times from work. For example, if a 3-hour **ADJUSTED WORK DISMISSAL** policy is announced, workers who normally leave their offices at 3:30 p.m. would be authorized to leave at 12:30 p.m. (For additional guidance on excused absence, see the paragraph following the table below.)



**How is leave handled when the FEB announces an ADJUSTED WORK DISMISSAL policy?**

<b>Employee Action</b>	<b>Leave Policy</b>
Employee is on duty.	Agency should grant excused absence for the remainder of the workday following the employee's authorized time of dismissal even if the employee is scheduled to take leave later in the day.
Employee leaves before official announcement of <b>ADJUSTED WORK DISMISSAL</b> policy or before the time set for his or her dismissal.	The agency should charge leave for the remainder of the workday following the time of the employee's departure.
Employee is scheduled to return from leave after official announcement of <b>ADJUSTED WORK DISMISSAL</b> policy, but before the time set for his or her dismissal.	The agency should grant excused absence for the remainder of the workday following the time of the official announcement through the remainder of the workday, even if the employee is scheduled to take leave again later in the workday.
Employee is telecommuting at an alternative work site.	Agency should grant excused absence for the remainder of the workday following what would be the employee's authorized time of dismissal.
Employee is absent on previously approved leave (annual, sick, or LWOP) for the entire workday.	The agency should continue to charge the employee leave for the entire workday.
Employee fails to report for work.	The agency should charge AWOL or permit the employee to request annual leave, sick leave, or LWOP, as appropriate, for the entire workday. Exceptions to this policy should be made only in unusual circumstances.

**Excused Absence**–Agencies may excuse an employee without loss of pay or charge to leave (i.e., grant a reasonable amount of excused absence) to avoid hardships. For example, excused absence may be granted to employees who need to leave before official announcement of an Adjusted Work Dismissal policy or before the employee's authorized time of dismissal because younger children are released from school/child care centers earlier than the announced dismissal time and no alternative forms of child care are available. However, employees have no entitlement to excused absence. Agencies must notify employees of the procedures to be followed in these situations.



**For More Information:**

- The status of Federal Government operations is available on OPM's web site at [www.opm.gov](http://www.opm.gov)
- On excused absences, leave and work scheduling policies, contact OPM's Office of Compensation Administration at (202) 606-2858 or email [payleave@opm.gov](mailto:payleave@opm.gov)